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Executive Board of the United Nations Development Programme, the United Nations Population Fund and the United Nations Office for Project Services

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Organizational matters

Annex

Report of the joint meeting[1] of the Executive Boards of UNDP/UNFPA/UNOPS, UNICEF, UN-Women and WFP

I. Middle-income countries: The role and presence of the United Nations for the achievement of the internationally agreed development goals

1. The President of the Executive Board of UNDP, UNFPA and UNOPS opened the meeting and invited the Executive Director of UNFPA to make an introductory statement on behalf of the six organizations. Next, presentations were made by four panellists: H.E. Mr. Ertuğrul Apakan, Permanent Representative of Turkey to the United Nations; Mr. Abdel Malek Achergui, Head, Division of United Nations System for Development, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation, Morocco; Professor Ravi Kanbur, T.H. Lee Professor of World Affairs, International Professor of Applied Economics, Professor of Economics, Cornell University; and Mr. Diego Palacios, Representative, United Nations country team, and UNFPA Representative, Mexico (via video conference).

[1] The joint meeting took place at the United Nations in New York on 30 and 31 January 2012. The agenda, background papers for the four segments of the joint meeting and available presentations may be accessed from the respective websites of the six organizations:
http://www.beta.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/operations/executive_board/documents_for_sessions/adv2012-first.html
http://www.unfpa.org/public/home/exbrd/pid/8683
http://www.unops.org/english/whoweare/ExecutiveBoard/EBsessiondocs/Pages/EB2012.aspx
http://www.unicef.org/about/execboard/index_59925.html
http://www.unwomen.org/about-us/governance/executive-board/joint-meeting-2012/
http://documents.wfp.org/stellent/groups/public/documents/resources/wfp243903.pdf .

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2. Following the presentations, the Member States, the panellists and the representatives of UNDP, UNFPA, UNOPS, UNICEF, UN-Women and WFP engaged in a dynamic, interactive discussion. Key issues raised by delegations during the discussion included the following:

(a) Middle-income countries (MICs) continue to need support from the development community because of the remaining poverty and inequality and other aspects of their unfinished development agenda. A disengagement from MICs would mean neglect of the majority of the world's poor and disadvantaged, which would be unacceptable;

(b) Multilateral engagement and strengthening of partnerships with MICs are particularly important because of the need to ensure that assistance to these countries benefits all categories of countries, especially the least developed ones. This entails the continuous importance of the United Nations and the increasing role of South-South and triangular partnerships, which should complement (not substitute for) North-South development assistance. The emphasis on building national capacity is of paramount significance;

(c) A modified country classification system is needed. No single indicator, such as income, can reflect the diversity of development challenges. Moving away from a universal criterion may entail conceiving a more refined classification of "middle-development" countries and reliance on multiple indicators related to various facets of the unfinished development agenda -- poverty, hunger, infant and maternal mortality, gender inequality and lack of access to education. In devising a new classification, the United Nations can build on the experiences of the partner organizations that already account for several indicators in their resource allocation systems. Harmonization of these systems across the United Nations should also be pursued;

(d) Heterogeneity among MICs calls for contextualized, well-tailored and dynamic approaches. It is critical to ensure flexibility, following the principle that no one size fits all;

(e) Improving operational efficiency and effectiveness is contingent on the catalytic involvement of the United Nations in MICs, creating synergies among the partner organizations and better utilization of resources. "Doing more with less" should build on best practices and their adaptation to different contexts. To achieve efficiency, a balance between the available core and non-core resources is essential.

3. The discussion at the joint meeting of the Executive Boards was expected to contribute to ongoing discussions on the development of a flexible, coherent and strategic framework for United Nations engagement with MICs.

II. Least developed countries: United Nations collaborative contribution to the implementation of the Istanbul Programme of Action

4. The session commenced with the President of the Executive Board of UN-Women welcoming the representatives of the six United Nations organizations and the four guest speakers. The Executive Director of UNOPS was invited to present the background paper on behalf of the six organizations. He highlighted the renewed focus of the 2011 Istanbul Programme of Action (IPoA) on strengthening productive capacities, on striking a balance in the allocation of resources between economic and social sectors, and on building resilience.

5. After the presentations by the guest speakers, six delegations took the floor raising the following issues:

(a) The operational activities of the United Nations in low-income countries, least developed countries (LDCs) and conflict-affected countries should be strengthened, while the presence in middle-income countries should be financed mainly by national contributions;

(b) In strengthening the productive capacities of LDCs due regard must be given to ensuring sustainable production patterns and use of resources;

(c) Although the responsibility for the implementation of IPoA lies with LDCs themselves, international support is key, including South-South initiatives. It is crucial to engage a broader range of partners such as the private sector and emerging economies like China, India and South Africa;

(d) Delivering as One must be encouraged as it brings greater coherence, transparency, effectiveness, efficiency and enhanced harmonization;

(e) The six United Nations organizations should work more closely with the United Nations Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States and actively participate in the task forces established to further elaborate on the implementation of IPoA.

6. The following points were emphasized by the representatives of the six United Nations organizations:

(a) The six United Nations organizations confirmed full commitment to LDCs and noted that the implementation of IPoA would be factored into the new strategic plans;

(b) The challenge of the next generation of Delivering as One is to further reduce the transaction costs within the United Nations system by simplifying internal processes;

(c) UNDP will continue to engage with countries in the extracting sector (including minerals, oil and gas) to support negotiations, income redistribution policies and trade capacity-building;

(d) Infrastructure needs to be embedded in the development agenda and can be a key factor in unleashing the potential of LDCs. Effective support to community infrastructure such as clinics, rural roads, houses and schools must build on local knowledge and experience;

(e) Procurement can be a powerful tool to boost local economies and promote sustainability. For example, WFP is working towards more "local farmer-friendly" rules, while the United Nations Environment Programme and UNOPS have been working on sustainable procurement guidelines;

(f) Need to focus on delivery and on the identification of critical barriers to accessing services, including sexual and reproductive health, family planning and education, and economic opportunities in LDCs, with specific focus on youth and women. Monitoring and evaluation need to feed into sharper analysis and sound programming to enable learning from proven best practices;

(g) Social and human capital must be protected. For example, investing in food-based safety nets is essential as malnutrition remains the single biggest cause of child mortality.

III. Making United Nations operational activity work for accelerated development: Quadrennial comprehensive policy review (Delivering as One, results reporting)

7. The President of the Executive Board of UNICEF chaired the meeting. Following introductory remarks given by the Administrator of UNDP and the Executive Director of UNICEF, the representatives of UNDP, UNFPA, UNICEF, UNOPS, UN-Women and WFP and a number of delegations engaged in a thoughtful discussion that offered useful recommendations.

8. Several delegations endorsed the focus on equity, with an emphasis on measuring results. They highlighted results tracking, the recently adopted principles of results reporting, gender equality results, disaggregation of results, and the importance of socio-economic indicators. One delegation noted that information on results should help inform decision-making by Member States. Referring to the monitoring framework known as the Cup, which focuses on achieving results through identifying and overcoming bottlenecks to progress, some delegations suggested that United Nations organizations in addition to UNICEF might adopt a "cup" approach where appropriate. One delegation underlined the importance of results for areas beyond reporting, including for planning, delivery, measurement, sustainability and accountability. It was said that adherence to a results-based management approach would enhance the credibility of the United Nations system.

9. A number of delegations stressed the importance of solutions based on country contexts. Others emphasized the Millennium Development Goals and poverty eradication as being the highest of United Nations priorities. Also noted was the importance of coordinating – and not duplicating – the various ongoing and upcoming development agendas and initiatives, including the Millennium Development Goals, the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20), and planning for post-2015.

10. Increasing support for capacity development, utilizing local resources, and enhanced South-South cooperation were also encouraged. Within the changing development context, some delegations raised concerns about declining core resources.

11. While noting that the process and outcome of the 2011 Fourth High-level Forum on Aid Effectiveness, held in Busan, Republic of Korea, lay outside the United Nations itself, some delegations suggested that the quadrennial comprehensive policy review of the United Nations operational activities for development (QCPR) should reflect the aid effectiveness agenda from Busan, including the "New Deal for Engagement in Fragile States". Delegations also highlighted the importance of post-conflict and fragile State issues.

12. In her concluding remarks, the Administrator of UNDP outlined the QCPR priorities: (a) affirming the relevance of the United Nations system; (b) recognizing the diversity and strengths of the United Nations organizations; and (c) underscoring the importance of coherence in United Nations development operations, especially on cross-cutting issues.

13. The Executive Director of UNICEF reiterated strong support for Delivering as One while noting that lessons learned from the independent evaluation were awaited. He

emphasized that continued funding of Delivering as One would require demonstrated results on the ground.

14. The President of the Executive Board of UNICEF closed the meeting by emphasizing that United Nations organizations needed to work collectively, with development as their goal. The organizations, he said, should put aside their individual mandates where necessary to concentrate on the core issues.

IV. Transition

15. The segment on the transition topic was chaired by the President of the Executive Board of WFP and jointly coordinated by UN-Women and WFP.

16. Introducing the background paper on behalf of the six organizations, the Executive Director of UN-Women spoke of the comparative advantage of the United Nations in transitional contexts and the challenges faced in such contexts. The Deputy Emergency Relief Coordinator, Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), emphasized that humanitarian response was limited in its ability to build long-term capacity and systems. The United Nations should support national compacts, and its organizations should work together around common priorities. There was a need for joint development strategies, and humanitarian clusters could play a role in capacity development. The OCHA representative highlighted the Resident Coordinator's role in delivering strategic coherence.

17. Member States welcomed the discussion on transition and stressed the importance of national ownership. They also emphasized that the United Nations was the best placed to work on transition from a humanitarian to a development situation; and the Inter-Agency Standing Committee Transformative Agenda 2012 was critical for success. Delegations noted that the United Nations integrated missions may impact humanitarian space and stressed the importance of selecting Resident Coordinators with experience in humanitarian affairs.

18. Delegations recommended that development planning start early in transition and called on organizations and donors to analyse, manage and accept risks. The need for better coordination among all partners was underscored. Delegations urged support for the compacts called for in the "New Deal for Engagement in Fragile States". It was noted that flexible funding mechanisms were crucial, along with strong leadership and rapid deployment of qualified staff with the right experience.

19. Attention was drawn to issues of peacebuilding and state-building and the importance of ensuring engagement of the United Nations organizations and sufficient support for Resident Coordinators. It was noted that United Nations work in transition settings should be reflected in the quadrennial comprehensive policy review.

20. Several delegations highlighted the need to build resilience, especially targeting the most vulnerable, including in middle-income countries. Delegations called for a common platform and joint United Nations programmes on resilience. Several delegations noted that transitions could present opportunities to promote gender equality.

21. In response, UNICEF stressed the importance of social services delivered equitably by national partners. UNDP highlighted the importance of governance and of addressing resilience in United Nations planning frameworks. UNOPS emphasized the importance of climate-related disaster risk reduction, rebuilding hope by demonstrating visible results, focusing on results and seeking policy coherence. UNFPA called attention to the need for

better integration of humanitarian and development frameworks, to include recovery and transition work from the onset of emergency response, and to include emergency preparedness, disaster risk reduction and resilience in country-level planning. WFP emphasized the need for flexibility in funding transitions. It underscored that women's empowerment should be recognized not only as a principle but also as a development issue.